

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM

Report Title: SOUTHERN MARIN SEWERS – So Many Districts, So Few Users

Report Date: April 27, 2004

Response by: Almonte Sanitary District

Title: Bonner Beuhler, Manager

FINDINGS

- I/we agree with the findings numbered: _____
- I/we disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F5, F6
 - ❖ Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered R1 have been implemented
 - ❖ Attach a summary describing the implemented actions
- Recommendations numbered _____ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future
 - ❖ Attach a timeframe for the implementation
- Recommendations numbered R2 and R3 require further analysis
 - ❖ Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report
- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable
 - ❖ Attach an explanation

Date: 5/24/04

Signed: 
Bonner Beuhler, Manager

Number of pages attached 2

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Finding F5: Having the responsibility for sewage collection and treatment spread between so many agencies inhibits the investigation that cross agency boundaries.

Disagree:

As noted in the response by David Coe, General Manager of the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin (a joint-powers agency consisting of Almonte, Alto, Homestead Valley and Richardson Bay Sanitary Districts, Tamalpais Valley Community Services District and the City of Mill Valley) communication between agencies and investigation of issues that cross agency boundaries occurs on a regular ongoing basis.

Upcoming requirements by the Regional Board for Sewer System Management Plans have been addressed in workshops at the local and regional level.

Sharing of laboratory resources of occurs on a regular basis.

Groups such as the Marin Association of Sewerage Supervisors (MASS), Marin County Special Districts Association (MCSDA) and the Redwood Empire Section of the California Water Environment Association provide forums to discuss issues and share information.

Ad Hoc discussions occur regularly between staff of the various Sanitary Districts regarding common problems and issues.

Finding F6: One agency is occasionally pitted against another as it seeks the lowest cost service for its constituency.

Disagree: We disagree with the characterization that one agency is *pitted against another* in seeking lowest cost service for its constituency. By and large all of the subject agencies seek to discharge their public duty by assuring that their respective agencies operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. Generally, the goals of the various agencies are in concert with each other. Mutual cooperation has and continues to characterize the relationship amongst the group, especially within the six SASM member agencies.

We note that the current discussions with regard to possibly rerouting flow from Sausalito-Marín City to SASM is the only example cited where one agency may have the potential of being adversely affected by the actions of another. However, the treatment and disposal services provided by Sausalito-Marín City Sanitary District to Tamalpais Valley are the result of a long-standing, negotiated contractual relationship. The contract between the parties contemplated termination of the agreement. Specific terms of the contract, negotiated in good faith, deal with the rights and obligations of both parties should one party choose to terminate the relationship. Even if one agency may face some degree of financial hardship, it is possible that the overall potential benefits in terms of logic, good engineering, cost-effectiveness and environmental protection may make sense for a greater number of southern Marin residents.

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I would take exception to the grand jury conclusion that rerouting of TCSD flow from Sausalito-Marín City to SASM would have a detrimental environmental impact. I do not believe there is evidence to support this conclusion.

As a side-note, Richardson Bay Sanitary District had a similar contract for treatment with Sausalito-Marín City that was cancelled in the early 80's as a result of the upgrading of wastewater facilities within the county and a rerouting of all of its flow to the City of Mill Valley treatment Plant.

Recommendation R1: A forum should be established, and meet regularly, as a way for staff and elected officials from all eleven sewage agencies to exchange ideas and experiences.

This recommendation has been implemented by the Marin Association of Sewerage Supervisors which has implemented semiannual meetings that will include all eleven sewer service providers in Southern Marin. Almonte Sanitary District will participate in these meetings.

Recommendation R2: An impartial facilitator should be engaged to conduct a meeting of agency representatives at which opportunities for consolidation, collaboration, and cooperation are explored and short-term objectives set.

This recommendation requires further analysis. LAFCO is in the process of hiring a consultant as part of its statutory requirements to conduct periodic service reviews and sphere of influence studies. Almonte believes these efforts can be productively combined to provide a common forum that is both productive and avoids duplication of effort. All of the agencies responsible for sewage collection in southern Marin have voiced a willingness to participate in such a forum. The Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin is currently discussing the possibility of taking the lead in conducting such a facilitated forum.

Recommendation R3: After a facilitated meeting is held, based upon consensus regarding consolidation established by the agencies, LAFCO should proceed with a study of alternatives.

This recommendation requires further analysis. As noted, LAFCO has issued a Request for Proposals to conduct an independent consultant study of sewer service provision in southern Marin. Almonte would be happy to participate in the forum and make suggestions regarding potential avenues of fruitful study, but it is clear that LAFCO bears ultimate responsibility for directing the study and signing off on the results.